

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR
AMEMBASSY MANILA
AMEMBASSY PARIS
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE
AMEMBASSY TOKYO
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 18164

CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR EAID ASEAN JA TH
SUBJECT: JAPANESE FOREIGN MINISTER'S VISIT TO THAILAND

REF: BANGKOK 17854

1. DR OWAT, DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE POLITICAL DEPARTMENT,
MFA, TOLD CHARGE JUNE 23 THAT HE FELT RECENT VISIT TO THAILAND
OF JAPANESE FONMIN SONODA HAD BEEN QUITE CONSTRUCTIVE AND
ESPECIALLY USEFUL FOR SONODA TO MEET WITH HIS ASEAN COUNTERPARTS
AND ESTABLISH A DIALOGUE WITH THEM. HE SAID SONODA HAD RE-
EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE JAPAN ATTACHES TO ITS RELATIONS WITH
THE ASEAN COUNTRIES AND GENERALLY IMPRESSED THE ASEAN PARTICIPANTS
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AS A MAN WHO COULD GET THINGS DONE. HE DESCRIBED SONODA AS VERY
CAREFUL IN HIS CHOICE OF WORDS BUT POSSESSING A FORCEFUL PERSONALITY.

2. TOUCHING FIRST ON ASEAN MATTERS, OWAT DESCRIBED THE MEETINGS
AS FRANK. HE FELT SONODA HAD BEEN IMPRESSED BY THE ARGUMENTS
CONCERNING THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF ASEAN. IN RESPONSE TO
CALLS FOR GREATER ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE, INCLUDING REMOVAL OR

REDUCTION OF TRADE BARRIERS, SONODA REPLIED THAT HE COULD NOT DISCLOSE CERTAIN PROPOSALS PRESENTLY UNDER DELIBERATION IN TOKYO BUT INDICATED GOJ'S INTENTION TO DOUBLE OVER-SEAS DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE WITHIN THREE YEARS AND MENTIONED TARGET OF 7 PERCENT GNP GROWTH RATE TO STIMULATE IMPORTS AND INTERNAL CONSUMPTION. SONODA HAD INDICATED CLEARLY THAT JAPAN WAS NOT PREPARED TO ACCEPT REFUGEES BUT WOULD CONSIDER CAREFULLY WHAT IT COULD DO TO HELP WITH A SOLUTION.

3. THE BILATERAL TALKS, OWAT SAID, FOCUSED ON FIVE SUBJECTS: ECONOMIC COOPERATION, CULTURAL EXCHANGE, REFUGEES, THAI VIEWS ON ASEAN-INDOCHINA RELATIONS, AND THAI-U S RELATIONS.

4. WITH REGARD TO THE FIRST, JAPAN DESIRES TO SUPPORT THAI AGRICULTURAL AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT PLANS AND WILL CONSIDER LOANS FOR PROJECTS WHEN THEY ARE DEVELOPED. THAI FONMIN UPPADIT RAISED THE PERENNIAL TRADE IMBALANCE AND SUGGESTED THAT THE GOJ RELAX RESTRICTIONS, INCREASE QUOTAS AND ENCOURAGE THE JAPANESE PRIVATE SECTOR TO BUY MORE THAI PRODUCTS. SONODA AGREED THAT TRADE IMBALANCE SHOULD BE RECTIFIED. HE POINTED OUT THAT PAST YEAR CONSTITUTED A SPECIAL CASE AS DIFFICULTIES WITH SUGAR AND MAIZE COINCIDED WITH AN INCREASE IN THAI IMPORTS OF MACHINERY. HE URGED THAILAND TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY AND COMPETITIVENESS OF ITS EXPORTS. HE PROMISED TO GIVE CAREFUL CONSIDERATION OF THE RTG REQUESTS SO THAT THEY COULD BE FULLY DISCUSSED AT THE NEXT MEETING.

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5. THERE WAS LITTLE TO REPORT ON THE OTHER SUBJECTS. SONODA REPEATED THE WILLINGNESS OF THE GOJ TO PROVIDE FURTHER EXCHANGES IN THE CULTURAL FIELD AND AMONG YOUTH. IN A SEPARATE MEETING WITH DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER, JAPAN WAS ASKED TO CONTRIBUTE TO A YOUTH RECREATION CENTER TO BE CONSTRUCTED AT DIN DAENG (A SLUM AREA OF BANGKOK) FOR BANGKOK'S BICENTENNIAL. SONODA ASKED ABOUT U S - THAI RELATIONS AND WAS GIVEN A RUNDOWN OF THE RECENT VISIT BY VICE PRESIDENT MONDALE, INCLUDING HIS STATEMENTS THAT THE U S WOULD REMAIN A PACIFIC POWER AND HONOR ITS COMMITMENTS IN THE REGION. AS HE HAD WITH THE ASEAN REPRESENTATIVES, SONODA SYMPATHIZED WITH THAILAND'S REFUGEE PROBLEM BUT REITERATED THAT JAPAN COULD NOT ACCEPT REFUGEES. HE PROMISED TO CONSIDER WHAT ELSE THE GOJ MIGHT DO TO ALLEVIATE THE SITUATION.

6. TALKS ON RELATIONS WITH INDOCHINA FOCUSED MAINLY ON THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER PROBLEMS. THERE STILL IS NO DATE FOR THE VISIT TO THAILAND BY IENG SARY BUT THE THAI ARE LOOKING FOR A LATE JUNE/EARLY JULY DATE AND HOPE THAT SUCH A VISIT WILL LEAD TO SOME IMPROVEMENT IN RELATIONS.

7. SONODA PROMISED TO REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF ASEAN AT THE BONN

SUMMIT AND NOTED THAT IN TALKS WITH SECRETARY VANCE AND NATIONAL SECURITY ADVISOR BREZEVINSKI HE HAD STRESSED THE IMPORTANCE OF THAILAND TO REGIONAL SECURITY BECAUSE OF ITS POSITION ON THE "FRONT LINE" OF THE NON-COMMUNIST NATIONS OF SOUTHEAST ASIA.

COMMENT: OWAT SAID THE ASEAN COUNTRIES ARE NOT GOING TO BE LONG SATISFIED WITH JAPANESE RESPONSES ON ECONOMIC QUESTIONS. HOWEVER, THEY DID NOT WANT TO PRESS SONODA TOO HARD ON THEIR INITIAL MEETING. OWAT CONVEYED CLEARLY VIEW THAT SONODA HAD MADE A HIGHLY FAVORABLE IMPRESSION ON THE ASEAN MINISTERS. HE ALSO INDICATED THAT ASEAN AND THE RTG LOOKED ON HIS VISIT AS A USEFUL, CONSTRUCTIVE STEP FORWARD IN JAPAN'S DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS WITH ASEAN AND THAILAND AND IN EDUCATING SONODA HIMSELF TO SEA SITUATION. OWAT WAS NOT PRESENT FOR SONODA'S MEETING ON ECONOMIC CONFIDENTIAL

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MATTERS WITH DEPUTY MINISTER SUNTHOM OR THE SESSION WITH PRIME MINISTER KRIANGSAK. CONSEQUENTLY HIS COMMENTS ARE SKETCHIER THAN THOSE FROM THE JAPANESE.
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